

VZCZCXRO0715
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHJL #0318 1391217
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 191217Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL
TO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0272
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6680
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

UNCLAS BANJUL 000318

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KMCA](#) [AU](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: UDPATE ON DETAINEES, STATUS OF
NEWSPAPER

REF: A. BANJUL 297

[B](#). BANJUL 301
[C](#). BANJUL 300
[D](#). BANJUL 316 (ALL NOTAL)

STATUS OF DETAINEES

[1](#). (SBU) Ref a reports the initial court hearing March 10 for 16 detainees charged in connection with the coup plot thwarted here March 21. Our contacts indicate that, in subsequent days, these detainees have finally been allowed to receive visits from family members and lawyers; refs b and c report conoff's visit to detained Amcit (dual national) Tamsir Jasseh. Among the estimated five or so detainees that have yet to be charged, we are aware of at least one, Mariam Denton, Jasseh's lawyer, who has received visitors. According to a well-informed journalist, at least two detainees, former National Intelligence Agency (NIA) officials Abdoulie Kujabi and Ngor Secka, remain hospitalized due to beatings by authorities.

SAGA OF THE "INDEPENDENT"

[2](#). (SBU) Meanwhile, the privately owned journal, "Independent," closed by authorities shortly after the failed coup attempt, has yet to resume operation. According to our journalistic source, the GOTG fears that, given the paper's hardline anti-government orientation, if allowed now to resume publication, its articles could unacceptably tarnish President Jammeh's image in the runup to the African Union Summit scheduled to be held here in late June/July. While the paper's General Manager and Editor-in-Chief, detained for several weeks after the overthrow attempt, remain free on bail, its journalist, Lamin Fatty, remains in custody and has now been formally charged with the offense of "publishing false information" -- presumably based on his article erroneously reporting the detention of a former senior official for suspected involvement in the foiled plot.

COMMENT

[3](#). (SBU) We are continuing to register our concern to the GOTG over the negative human rights trend here and urge steps to reverse that trend, most recently in Ambassador's May 18 meeting with the senior Presidential adviser (ref d) It is noteworthy that the African Union's Commission on Human and People's Rights, based in Banjul, is currently holding its annual session here; to our knowledge, the session has yet to produce any public criticism of the Gambian hosts' current backsliding on human rights, but we are told that some attendees -- e.g., from South Africa -- have voiced concern in behind-the-scenes discussions with Gambian officials. END

COMMENT.
STAFFORD